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United States Patent and Trademark Office
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450
USA

1 June 2006

Re: Application 10/647,949, Bollacker et al, A Visual Representation Tool for Structured Arguments.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to provide information which might be of some assistance in making your final assessment of the application mentioned above.

My understanding, at time of writing, is that:

- the application has been given a non-final rejection by you
- the applicants have submitted an amended set of claims
- the application is awaiting a final assessment.

I believe that you were correct, in your non-final rejection, in every instance where you rejected a claim on the grounds that it had been anticipated or that the idea was obvious.

You did allow that a number of claims might be allowed if rewritten in a suitable form. I respectfully submit that even these claims should be disallowed, on similar grounds.

As I'm sure you were aware, the system described in the patent application constitutes a merging of two developments:

1. Software for visualising structured argument, a.k.a. "argument mapping".
2. Mathematical theories of evidence and belief revision and associated computational procedures.

From a patent perspective, the application would seem to be of little merit since:

- the system contributed little if anything new in the two fields just mentioned, having been thoroughly anticipated by many examples of prior work; and

- combining these two fields is an obvious idea, indeed something which had already been done; see for example I Zukerman, R McConachy and K B Korb: Bayesian reasoning in an abductive mechanism for argument generation and analysis, in J Mostow & C Rich (eds), *Proceedings of the Fifteenth National Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI-98)*, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, 26-30 July 1998, AAAI Press, CA, USA, ISBN: 0-262-51098-7, 833-838.

In the attachments to this letter, I provide more details bearing on these assertions. In particular I provide:

1. A list of claims you deemed to be potentially allowable, with information about anticipations of those claims;
2. A list of new claims in the applicants' amended claim sheet, with information about anticipations of those claims; and
3. Some background about argument mapping which may be of interest.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim van Gelder', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tim van Gelder
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